

Tone's Tidings

January/February 2018 Issue 24



St Edmundsbury Male Voice Choir
Patron: The Rt. Hon The Earl of Iveagh
President: Paul Deane
Vice Presidents: John Balaam, Dr John Meers
Registered Charity No. 1028123



The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, moves on. (The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam)

We write of friends we have lost, and the memories that linger on.

Saturday 27 January 2018

A concert was held with Downham Preparatory School Choir in St Nicholas' Chapel, King's Lynn. Report next month.

Saturday 24 February, St Mary's Church, Barton Mills Memorial Concert for Shirley with Emma French

Thank you so much SEMVC for a wonderful evening concert at Barton Mills Church. We were clearly all there to support the appeal for Pancreatic cancer and were united in our fondness for Shirley and Jim Beardsmore. Shirley had picked a cracking number of pieces for the programme and each one was a delight.

There were such a lot of favourites amongst these gems, but worthy of a special mention has to be *The Seal Lullaby* which was hauntingly beautiful. The choir and accompanying musicians provided a stunning version of this piece, which I had never heard before. The humming, phrasing and dynamics were superb. I have played this piece every day since! *Bridge over Troubled Water* was very emotional after a very touching introduction and *Aberystwyth* was fantastic with the addition of the organ and was a very moving rendition also.

The choir remain constantly focussed. The words were clearly executed and the dynamics were sublime. In my opinion the way the choir ended all their pieces with extended final notes and very varying dynamics, put them apart from many other choirs. It is clear that this choir is very disciplined, but there is such a love and passion throughout the pieces that the audience is taken along with the choir's songs and the fluidity of the conducting. It was very refreshing to see the conducting being shared and people moving round to play different instruments, which continued to show the choir's versatility.

The soloist David was brilliant, his voice was so clear and powerful and was very well balanced with the rest of the choir.

A special mention of the accompanists must also be madethey were absolutely superb; the piano, guitar and organ were faultless and added so much to the richness of the choir's interpretation of their pieces. Mark's relaxed style of interjecting between pieces was both humorous and heartfelt and made the audience look forward to each piece too. Many, many congratulations SEMVC, you did yourselves proud and Shirley would have been delighted with the whole evening.

Best wishes Wendy Fincham

Emma French's posting on Facebook A massive thank you Mark, Calvin, Simon (Chris) and all the choir boys, you did an amazing concert last night, an emotional but uplifting evening, looking forward to seeing you all again. x

Next concert - Saturday 24 March in St Botolph's Church, Colchester with the Sing Express Big Band, in aid of the church tower appeal.

Ernest F Kirkwood, died 7 December 2017, aged 92 (known as Ernie)

In May 1993 SEMVC had its first concert visit in Europe when we visited Bury St Edmunds twin town, Kevelaer, in Germany to sing with their male voice choir, Kevelaerer Männer-Gesang-Verein. A few weeks before we departed we were given the name of the German family that were hosting each of us. As many are aware, Ernie had been a prisoner of war, captured by the allies in the Channel Islands and incarcerated in a camp near Rattlesden for the rest of the war. Here he met, Heather his future wife. After the war Ernie was unfortunately separated from his family in Germany because they were living in the east behind the "Iron Curtain" and not allowed to travel west beyond the Berlin wall.

Unbeknown to Ernie and Heather, the family that were hosting them in Kevelaer discovered that Ernie had not seen his relatives in eastern Germany for nearly 50 years. In 1989 East and West Germany were reunified with the opening of the border. The hosts secretly invited Ernie's relatives to come and stay with them over the weekend of the visit. As you can imagine it was a huge surprise for Ernie and Heather and a momentous occasion for all. SEMVC sang 22 of the 45 songs from our repertoire (at that time) on that evening of 29th May. The concert was held in the Bühnenhaus concert hall.

Another anecdote - during a rehearsal of typical repartee between Mark and the choir, Ernie coined the phrase "The Fat Controller" to describe our now somewhat slimmer Musical Director!

Ed Wilson

PS Sadly Heather died on 1 February 2018, aged 91.

Michael Akehurst (died 5 January 2018)



It came as a shock, if not disbelief, to open Nick's e-mail relating the sad news of Michael's heart attack, the condition this had left him in, and the sadness being compounded further by news of his passing.

For the 13 plus years that I have known him, Michael has been a 'presence' in the Choir, not just for his stature, more for his views on aspects of Choir life and procedures. It was his love of the Choir that would spur him on to question the ethics of an action, but it would also lead him to defend our 'Family Ethos'.

Michael's masterpiece was the 2006 Baltic Tour. The phenomenal workload he put upon himself produced a Tour that has written itself into Choir Folklore. It is a sad fact of life that you find out more about a person when they die, than you ever did whilst they were alive. This was made abundantly clear at Michael's funeral when many windows into Michael's life were opened by the ministry of his Friends. Tony F

**SEMVC 30th Anniversary Dinner
Saturday 20 January 2018**

I'm not sure anniversary dinners are a good idea! As a founder member of the choir, all it does is confirm how much older I am getting!!



Nevertheless, the gathering at Ashlar House in Bury St Edmunds was a very convivial evening. Great food, great company, the chance for a beer or two, old faces, new faces, president Paul Deane's eloquence – what more could you want? Oh yes, a sing-song at the end of the evening. Some of the songs were from the choir's earliest days and perhaps reflected this in their rendition, but how could you not have a good time? Hope I'm around for the next one! Ivor T

Who is hanging up his tonsils?



According to Nick's Choir data, Alan 'Stato' Messem joined the Choir in September 1993 as a Second Tenor. I do not know if his recording of what was sung at which concert and when, was a personal habit, but it makes interesting reading. A source of amusement was provided when he would recite the what, where and when for a piece that we were rehearsing, as was his insights into the weather's habits and his forecasting of it.

Alan has been, and still is a staunch supporter of the Choir and I know that it saddens him to forgo the weekly rehearsal and concert routines that he relished.

Because of ill-health, Alan decided to take a break from the Choir to hopefully 'sort out' his medical problems, but unfortunately this has not worked out as he had hoped. I shall miss our little chats on Thursdays, often about the people we both knew from the time when he was living in Kedington.

Tony F

Dates for your Diary

Sa 24 March - Concert with Swing Express Big Band, St Botolph's Church, Colchester CO2 7EE, in aid of tower repair appeal

Sa 14 April - Concert with Suffolk Constabulary MVC, St John the Baptist Church, Ipswich IP4 4QE

Th 10 - Su 13 May - Werdorf Choir, Germany visit SEMVC

F11 May - 'Sing for Your Supper' with Werdorf Choirs, Horringer

Sa 12 May - Concert with MGW 1865 Werdorf e.V., St Mary's Church, BSE IP33 1RT

Sa 9 June - Concert with Men2Sing, St Mary's Church, Newmarket CB8 0HP, in aid of church funds

Sa 16 June - Vauxhall MVC 75th celebration concert with Wycombe Orpheus and King's Lynn MVCs, The Square Methodist Church, Dunstable LU6 3SN

Sa 7 July - Sing for one hour, Race for Life, Nowton Park, BSE

Th 12 July - Elmswell Over 55s Club, Blackbourne Centre, Elmswell IP30 9GY

F 27 - Tu 31 July - Welsh Tour

Sa 22 September - Concert, Kedington Community Centre CB9 7QQ, in aid of Kedington Air Memorial Fund

Sa 17 November - Concert, St John's Church, BSE IP33 1JY, in aid of 'Every Heart Matters' appeal, West Suffolk Hospital

2019

Sa 23 March - Three Choir Festival with Mansfield and Bestwood MVCs, Southwell Minster *tbc*

Shirley Beardsmore (died 25 January 2018, aged 79)
by her 'bestest friend', Pat Fuller

Shirley Beardsmore was a very good friend and supporter of the Choir over many years, with Jim and Shirley being close friends of my family for over 40 years. Her sense of fun and zest for life was amazing; even when she became ill she tried to have a normal life. Shirley loved going on the Choir trips with Jim and they made a lot of friends with many members of the hosting Choirs.



On the trip to Dudley, 8 years ago, Ken forgot to pack his dress-shirt! Musical Director Mark, pre-diet, offered to lend him one of his, but even with a packet of safety pins it would not fit. Shirley and I went to buy Ken a new one, because of that Shirley introduced us and, as they say, the rest is history.

With her love of gardening and flower arranging she started the Barton Mills Horticultural Club; a great success. Shirley organised the members to participate in creating a small garden at the Sandringham Flower Shows for a few years in a row, always with a different theme. They won Best in Show, with a Gold Medal, and met Prince Charles and Camilla.

Many flower festivals were organised in her Church by Shirley, she was so good at getting everyone to do something fantastic, she also set up the flower rota so the Church always looked beautiful. There was no shortage of people to arrange the flowers for her funeral. Some of the Choir members will remember the Garden visiting holidays she organised along with day trips.

One of the highlights of a Choir trip was the Shirley Quiz; they were excellent, and always made the journey shorter. We knew that if Shirley and Jim came to one of our parties or events that there would always be a lot of fun and laughter - and there were many of them.

Shirley's three sons and their families have been amazing and a great source of comfort to Jim.

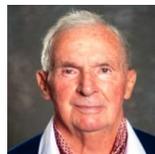
Shirley had chosen all the songs for the SEMVC's concert on February 24th and I know that each one had a special memory for her.

Shirley, whom I called my "Bestest Friend" (the spelling is meant!) has left behind so many happy memories which will help us to adjust to her loss.

We hope, Jim, that you will be back in the Choir soon.

Patricia Fuller (and Ken Sawyer)

Yet more sad news, just received



Second tenor, Roger Gray, has died aged 89. He will be buried in Rougham Churchyard on 23 March.

When 85, Roger's book *Git Ahind - Om Fust* was published. It is about his life growing up in Glemsford and includes memories of parading with the army cadets in Bury St Edmunds and boxing in the town's Corn Exchange.

And now some good news

At the Anniversary Dinner it was announced that Ernie Broom would be made an Honorary Life Member of SEMVC.

Ian Robertson (Bass), Concert Manager, was presented with his cufflinks for membership of SEMVC for 25 years.

Reports and pictures for Tidings are welcome.

Please contact Chairman Tony Farr, 01440 704179, lolandtony15@gmail.com